

## [Henry W. Black]

[FM?] G.D.:L.L. S260 - [NEG?] Dup.

FORM A Circumstances of Interview.

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio St.

DATE Nov. 7, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

1. Name and address of informant. Henry W. Black, 3007 N. 30 St.
2. Date and time of interview. Nov. 7, 1938—12:00 to 3:00 p.m.
3. Place of interview. In the home of Mr. Black.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. Mr. B.E. Squires—2918 N. 28th St.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you. None.
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Mr. Black lives in a very modern five room house that is very nicely furnished. The surroundings are very pleasant. As Mr. Black spends a great deal of time around his home he has made it very comfortable. He has a lot of collections and relics that he proudly display.

2

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio St.

DATE Nov. 7, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

## Library of Congress

MAKE AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Henry W. Black, 3007 N. 30 St.

1. Ancestry. Mr. Black's mother was Indian and his father French-Canadian and Negro.
2. Place and date of birth. Mr. Black was born in Chicago Ill. in 1872
3. Family. His family at present consist of a wife only. He has two children by a previous marriage. Both are living in California.
4. Place lived in, with dates. He lived in Chicago until the second fire in 1878. The family left Chicago and lived in Milwaukee for one year. After leaving Milwaukee the family lived in Kansas City Mo. for one year and came to Omaha in 1880. He has continued to live here since.
5. Education, with dates. Mr. Black was only able to secure a six grade education as he had to leave school and help support the family. His father left his mother with five other children and it was very necessary. However by going to night school he was able to further his education later.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates. Mr. Black is a retired Mail carrier having spent 37 years carrying mail in Omaha. He was retired in 1937 at the age of 65. At the present time he is enjoying his hobby of making scrap books, and traveling.
7. Special skills and interests. Mr. Black is interested in Community activities and is on the Board of Directors of the Urban League and the Colored Old Folks Home. He also serves his church in many different ways.
8. Community and religious activities. This is stated above as they are his interests.

## Library of Congress

9. Description of informant. Mr. Black is a man of light complexion. His hair is very gray which gives him a very distinguished appearance. He seems to be of very high mentality. He is above average height and although not fat he is very well developed physically.

10. Other points gained in interview.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Fred D. Dixon ADDRESS 2889 Ohio St.

DATE Nov. 7, 1938 SUBJECT Negro History

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT. Henry W. Black, 3007 N. 30 St.

Mr. Henry Black, who is one of Omaha's oldest Negro citizens, was born in Chicago, Ill. in 1872. He was one of five children. His father was owner of a small hotel in Chicago that was destroyed by the second Chicago fire. As the family was left nearly destitute they immediately left Chicago and went to Milwaukee Wisconsin where Mr. Black senior was able to secure employment. The family lived in Milwaukee for one year leaving there in 1879. Their next trip took them to Kansas City, Mo. where the father was able to secure better employment. The family remained in Kansas City for a short time, until Mr. Black heard of the opening of employment for Negroes in the Smelting industry. The family arrived in Omaha in 1880 and made their home in what was then the Negro district at Twentieth and Harney St.

During this period of time the population of Omaha's Negroes had increased to about five (5) hundred. This was due almost entirely to the various industries that were beginning to give Negroes employment.

Mr. Black is a retired mail carrier and has had the opportunity to work in various parts of the city, seeing and helping the city to grow. His hobby is and has been for the past fifty

## Library of Congress

years that of keeping a scrap book. He has newspaper clipping dateing dating back as far as 1895 that were used as reference material during the interview. From this Scrap-book 2 of Mr. Black we find that the first Negro child born in Omaha was William Leper. He was born in 1872 at 13th and Jackson St. in an old frame building. Harry Curry and Cumford Baker were the first graduates of the Omaha high. They were graduated in 1880. The first Negro physician in Omaha was Dr. Stephenson, who came to Omaha in 1890. Later Dr. Richetts came to Omaha. Dr. Richetts was the first Negro to serve in the State Legislature. This clipping is from the Omaha Progress dated February 21 1895. The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners met during the afternoon and appointed the following Negroes to the Fire Dept.—S.G. Ernest Capt; J.H. Henderson Lieut; Scott Jackson driver; Jas. D. Hardin and E.W. Watts regualrs; H.W. Black and P. Walker reserves.

From this Scrap-Book we find that the oldest Negro churches in Omaha are St. John A.M.E. church, which was organized in 1880, St. Phillip the Deacon organized in 1878 and Zion Baptist organized in 1884. Father Green was the first priest of St. Phillip. He served until about 1891 when Father John Albert Williams was called to this parish. Father Williams served this church until 1933 at the time of his death. His life was one of continuous service to his church and community.

Father Williams married Lucy Gambol, who was one of the two Negro teachers that have taught in the public schools of Omaha. The other Negro teacher in the public schools was Miss Eula Overall, now Mrs. Britt. Mrs. Britt lives in California.

The other pioneer Negroes that Mr. Black spoke of are: Cyrus Bell who edited the first Negro paper; Smith Coffee, who was the only Negro blacksmith in the city. Mr. Coffee was so strong that he was under peace 3 bond continually, as he often lost his temper and would injure any one he hit. The first Negro Hotel in Omaha was operated by a Mr. Lewis at 10th and Capitol Sts., and was owned by a Mr. Adams. This likewise was about 1890. The first Negro policeman to be appointed were; Frank Bellamy, Jess Newman,

## Library of Congress

Jack Russell and Noah Thomas. Mr. Thomas is living in Omaha and has promised to give information regarding the history of the early Omaha Police force.

Mr. Black was on the board of the Colored Old Folks home when it was organized and has continued to serve on it ever since. The old folks home was organized in 1913, and at the present time own their building. The old folks home is supported by the Community Chest and has been since 1923.

Mr. Black gave a very vivid account of the lynching of Brown in 1919. He had a newspaper dated Oct. 5, 1919, which states that -(16 MEN HELD ON ASSAULT AND RAPE CHARGE). Of this number three are Negroes. This account is from the Omaha News. It seemed strange that only one Negro was lynched yet they had three others in jail at the time, and 13 white men held on the same charge. This subject will be treated with a special account, more will not be given at this time.